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# 4D

## Information/Action

### *Fiscal Policy and Planning Committee of the Whole*

### **Proposal to Release an RFP for the Administration of Commission Exams**

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**Executive Summary:** Staff will present for consideration, a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the administration of the CBEST, CSET, and RICA examinations starting in 2007-08.

**Recommended Action:** That the Commission authorize the release an RFP to continue administering the CBEST, CSET, and RICA.

**Presenters:** Crista Hill, Division Director, Fiscal and Business Services Section, and Lawrence Birch, Interim Division Director, Professional Services Division

#### **Strategic Plan Goal:**

#### **Goal 1: Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators**

- Sustain high quality standards for the preparation of professional educators
- Sustain high quality standards for the performance of credential candidates



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## **Proposal to Release an RFP for the Administration of Commission Exams**

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### **Introduction**

This item is to inform members of the Commission of the need to release a Request for Proposal (RFP) to continue the administrations of the legislatively mandated California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET), and Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA) examinations. The current contracts for all of these testing programs expire on October 31, 2007, with the last administrations for the CBEST and both the Written Examination and Video Performance Assessment versions of the RICA in June 2007, and for the CSET in July 2007. The future of these examinations is unclear in the current structure, however until further direction is provided, Commission staff is requesting consideration of the release of an RFP for a contract to administer these examinations. In order to ensure that an examination is available in 2007-08, a new contract must be in place at the beginning of 2007 to allow the contractor time to develop implementation procedures, contract with testing sites, create registration bulletins, and a number of other activities required prior to an initial test administration. To do this, an RFP should be released early this summer.

Currently, the Commission is required to offer examinations in these content areas. Senator Jack Scott has two bills that have been introduced that could impact the future of these exams, SB 428 (Scott) and SB 1209 (Scott). Assuming both bills are passed and signed into law, a subsequent RFP for test development and administration of the revised examinations will be brought forward to the Commission for consideration. Additionally, if the RICA remains an independent examination, staff will request an additional RFP to address all RICA test development issues remaining so a revised RICA is available once the Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and Educational Specialist Instruction Credential programs have aligned their reading instruction component with any new standards.

### **Background**

Established law requires that various credential candidates verify competencies in basic skills, subject matter, and/or reading instruction prior to the issuance of their credential or the beginning of employment. The current examinations which address these areas are the CBEST, CSET, and RICA, respectively. The Commission is also charged with the responsibility to insure that these examinations are offered continuously and in a timely manner so candidates have a sufficient opportunities to sit for a needed examination.

The CBEST is the only option available for satisfying the basic skills requirement, which assesses reading comprehension, writing skills, and knowledge of mathematics at a level needed by educators to interact effectively with parents, peers, and others and to analyze data related to their profession. It is required for the issuance of most initial teaching and service credentials, certificates, and permits, and, in some cases, for the renewal of credentials. California districts and counties also use this to verify basic skills competencies for various employment situations. For the past number of years, this paper-and-pencil examination has been offered six times a year, every other month, in 35 testing areas within California.

The CSET is the current testing program that assesses subject matter competency for the Multiple and Single Subject Teaching Credentials and the Educational Specialist Instruction Credential. It is also used in verifying an educator as a highly qualified teacher for the federal No Child Left Behind employment requirement. The CSET is offered in 30 credential subject areas, with the more highly attended subject areas available six times a year and the

remainder available two or four times annually. For most subject areas, the CSET is administered in 25 testing areas across California.

The RICA verifies reading instruction knowledge and skills required of California-trained Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and the Educational Specialist Instruction Credential candidates. Prospective teachers have two options available to satisfy this requirement: the RICA Written Examination or the RICA Video Performance Assessment. The RICA Written Examination is offered six times a year, traditionally on the same date as the CBEST, in 21 testing areas California. The RICA Video Performance Assessment, which uses a portfolio-based model, offers scoring three times a year. A validity study is being initiated to review the current RICA test specifications. As new developments occur this will be brought forward to the Commission for consideration.

### **The Request for Proposals for the Test Administration**

The proposed RFP would allow for the continued administration of the current CBEST, CSET, and RICA testing programs, giving needed time in order to determine any desired changes to the testing programs.

The RFP would cover possibly a three-year period, subject to Department of General Services – Office of Legal Services approval, and call for a contractor to complete the following activities through the 2009-2010 testing year:

- CBEST test administration,
- CSET test administration,
- RICA Written Examination and Video Performance Assessment test administration, and
- Based on the Commission's wishes, create and implement an electronic testing format for all or any of these programs.

The test administration work established in the RFP would address the unique needs of each testing program. It would also cover the general work needed for any successful administrations, requiring proficiency in such areas as test security, program communications, program material production, examination registration, examination administration, item data management, scoring and score reports, examination material maintenance, and reports.

The RFP would also require bids to include information about creating and implementing electronic formats for these examinations. Based on the information presented in the bids, the Commission will be able to determine if they would like this implemented for any or all examinations. Also, by the time the bids are reviewed, there may be more concrete information available about the future of the three testing programs which might impact in the Commission's decision.

### **The Subsequent Request for Proposals: Test Development and Administration of Revised Examinations**

For all three testing programs, the CBEST, CSET, and RICA, there are a number of possible changes to the content and the testing structure that, at this time, may or may not happen. Possible changes may be anticipated, yet the method and schedule of implementation may be uncertain. Because of these factors, a subsequent RFP or series of RFPs may be needed to incorporate the revisions to the testing programs and administer the revised examinations.

If the Commission's wishes or legislation does not alter the current path of the RICA, the validity study may suggest revisions that result in the need to develop more test items and reassess the passing standards as well as modify Multiple Subject and Educational Specialist credential programs. If so, the modified credential programs would need to be available at least one term prior to the initial administration of a revised RICA so examinees have sufficient time to be trained in the new areas. Because it is difficult to project the time required to make program

changes, it may be more prudent to request the Commission's approval to release an RFP at a later date when more is known about the validity study results.

### **Recommendation**

Commission staff is requesting direction from the Commission to issue an RFP for the continued administration of the CBEST, CSET, and RICA so these examinations will remain available while their future is being determined.

Staff is available to answer any questions that members of the Commission may have.